



## The Paradigm of Religious Evolution: The Transformation of Rudra to Pashupata



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### Abstract

The Pashupata cult is the oldest known cult of the Saivism. Pashupata cult was established around 200 BC by Lakulisha. Born to a Brahmin family according to Karavana Mahatmya, he died in the seventh month and during his short span he displayed remarkable spiritual powers. His mother floated his body in a river as per the tradition and as said a group of tortoise carried the body to a Shiva shrine. The child became alive and became an ascetic. By yet another account Lakulisha died but was revived by Lord Siva himself. Lord entered his body and preached the Pashupata moral and ethics to the world. The place of his rebirth is today a town called Kayavarohana "to incarnate in another's body". This miracle is still celebrated among the Pashupata believers. The archeological department takes care of two stone inscriptions there with the names of Lakulisha's four disciples- Kushika, Maitreya, Gargya, and Kaurusha. Lakulisha was a basically a dynamic Pashupata reformist.

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### 1. Introduction

At the base of the Kalikadevi temple at Pavagadh Gujarat on the way to Champagne lies Lakulisha temple, one of the ancient temples but now in ruins. The temple dates to 10th century. As per the Mahabharata the Lakulisha cult existed into the first century A.D. Among many statues a very rare statue is that of Dakshinamukhi Shiva. Much of the upper part of the temple has ruined leaving standing walls and statues showing the actual splendor of the great Pashupata cult icon. Pashupata Shaivism is considered to have been originated at Kayavarohan in Gujarat and spread to Kashmir in north and Orissa in the east. In the later period it spread to Tamil Nadu in the seventh century A.D. Lakulisha's statues and paintings are found all over the Indian subcontinent indicating that his cult was well established.[1] The Pashupatis were ascetics and some scholars even claim that they were the followers of the Bhakti movement. Lakulisha was considered as an incarnation of

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Lord Shiva. He is represented as a multitalented figure as a yogi and a man of spiritual divinity very much similar to the Buddha's depiction in the Buddhist sculptures. His teachings are compiled in the Lakulisha Siddhanta, while in the images he is represented with a Lakuda (danda) in one arm. Images of Lakulisha is found in the Bhairava temple on the banks of the river Ganga near Bhubaneswar where he is portrayed as four armed with Jataa (long coiled hairs) and snake. Lakulisha's image is also found in Museum at Bhubaneswar.

## 2. Research Method

In this research paper, I have used biographical and historical approach. My primary sources have been mostly books available in the Amity university library. I also collected data from the National archives of India.

## 3. Results and Analysis

They follow a peculiar way of lifestyle wandering and pounding the dust over their body. They carry iron tridents. The lifestyle of Pashupatas was systematically chronicled by few and sometimes they left hostile comments thereby leaving the readers with a mixed image of their life and philosophical bent of thought. They allowed all to follow their cult showing that there was no caste-discrimination, although it was supposed for a Pashupata saint to come from the Brahmins. Few of the historians have tried to attach a relationship between these Pashupatas and the ash-smearing saints of the sixth century and also to the Indus Valley people due to the presence of seal depicting Pashupata, Lord Shiva. They followed a strict code of ethics called 'Yama and Niyama. Stress was given to Brahmacharya, Ahimsa, Non violence and Tapasya. As accounted in the Pashupata literature, their ethics was practiced in different stages. To start with they took vows and practiced to sing also called Siva-intoxicated laughing, singing and dancing. In the next step, they used to mingle in the society. They were supposed to perform some indecent acts to purposely initiate public anger like making snorting sounds, talking nonsense, walking like crippled and wild gesturing. This was basically a type of 'Sadhana' for self-purification and to uproot ego. The basic purpose is to get over the desire for acceptance from the people and to establish completely in the subconscious mind that 'like and dislike', 'praise and criticism' are all human ways of thinking and feeling. A person can overcome it if faith on Lord Siva is strong. So such types of steps were designed to completely break their links with society. They practiced austerity and then in the next step abandoned every worldly activity to perform 'Kundalini' yoga to achieve ultimate closeness with Lord Siva. A mature Pashupata monk acquired powers of omniscience.[2]

The Pashupata saints had a belief that if a person is strong in morals and ideals and accepts the insults, he will be well established in the way of asceticism. The Pashupata saint Kaundinya in his book 'Panchartha Bhashya' mentioned about the 'Pashupata Sutra' that a Pashupata yogi "must appear as mad with a body covered with filth, letting his nails, beard, and hair grow without any care. He removes himself from the varna and ashramas, and then the power of dispassion is developed." Pashupatism is basically an ascetic path that completely rejects dialectical logic and advocates sadhana as the only means to receive Lord Siva's blessings. The Seekers follow strict 'yama niyama' ethics, their sadhanas become progressive from action to non-action. The seekers follow puja, the process of penance, Namah Shivaya japa, to have covered with sacred ash and showing deep love to God Shiva.

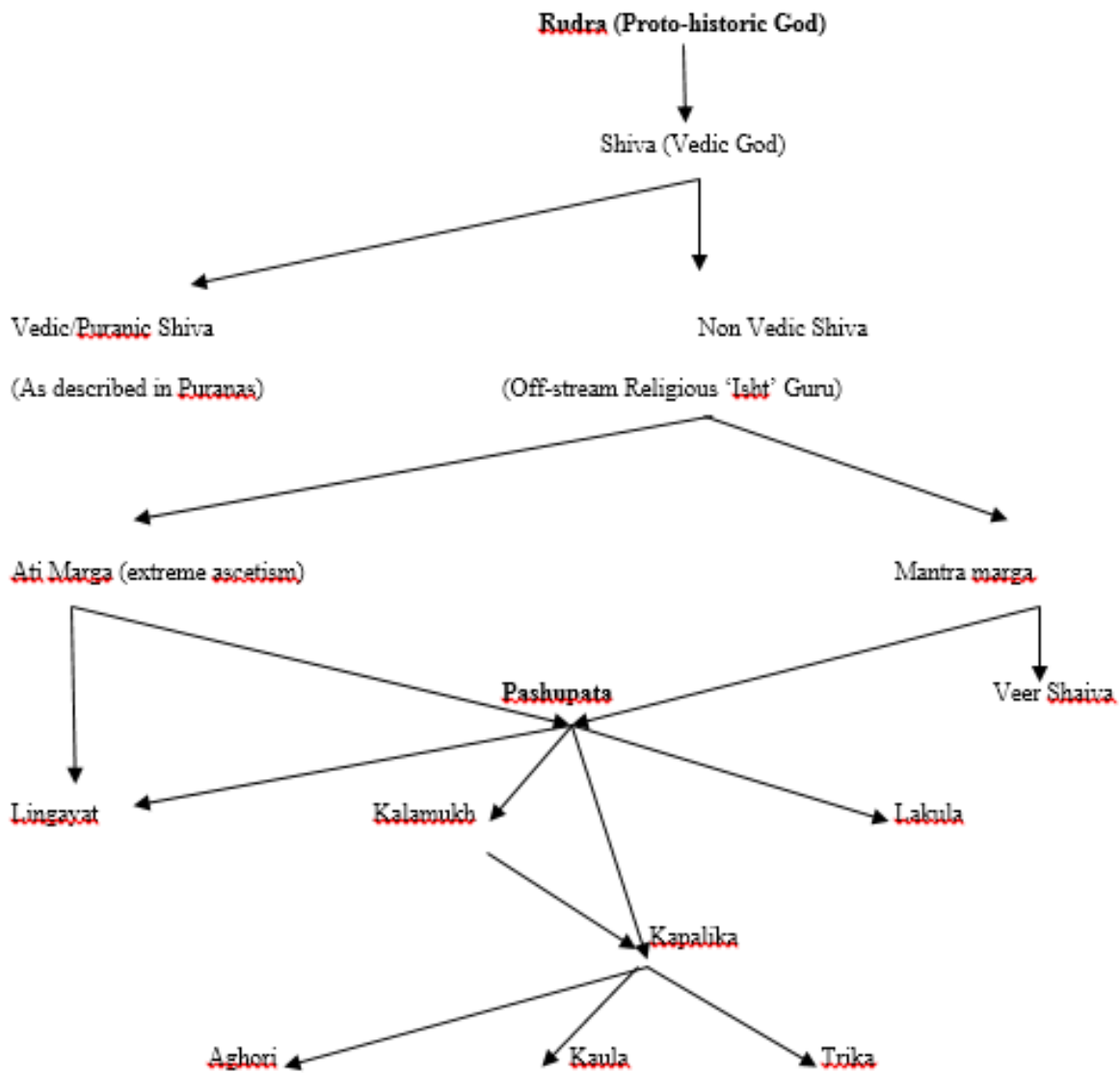
Kaundinya in his sutras while defining the codes of conduct restricted the admittance of the three upper castes i.e. Brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vaishya trying to link it with Vedic orthodox belief. Today many Pashupata temples are spread across India with Lakulisha as the incarnation of Lord Shiva. In the Pashupata temples, the image of Lakulisha is carved on the Shiva linga seated naked holding a 'Lakud' also called danda in his left hand and a citrus fruit in the other. Hiuen Tsang mentions the presence of over 10,000 Pashupatas in Varanasi. The Pashupata cult crossed the boundaries of India and reached Nepal in the eighth century.[3] The Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu is now a famous pilgrimage center. As per the tradition, the original Pashupata teachings have been a secret, supposed to be revealed to those believers who were tested and found to be most trustworthy. The scriptures available are the 'Pashupata Sutras' and Kaundinya's commentary on them. His 'Panchartha Bhashya' and the 'Mrigendra Agama'. As researched the Pashupata philosophy before Lakulisha was dualistic. In the absence of manuscripts, very little is known about it. Scholars have worked out from references that Pashupatis regard Lord Shiva as the only effective cause of the universe. It proposed five basic categories-cause, effect, union, ritual, and liberation. These categories were a bit unusual as the Pashupatis believed that the soul after salvation never merges in Lord Shiva and that state of liberation was simply another state with no further pain. They believed that Lord Shiva brings changes in the universe and in the life and fortune of human beings

according to his own will. In fact, Lord Shiva does not make fortune or misfortune of a person completely based on his karma. Lakulisha's Pashupata structure retained the basic idea of five categories but proposed that the ultimate aim of the soul is to attain divine perfection. He kept Lord Shiva as the sole material cause of the universe thereby directing the Pashupata philosophy from basic dualism to dual-nondual. According to him, the soul means 'Pashu', is hindered from attachment to Lord Shiva by fetters or 'Pasha'. The soul is able to retain its individuality even in its liberated form called 'sayujya', to be defined as close to but not union with Lord. Lord Siva practices no power over the liberated souls.

Kaundinya wrote in one of his commentaries on Pashupata Sutras that Lord Shiva took the form of a Brahman incarnation at Kayavarohana and walked to Ujjain where he told his philosophy to Bhagavat Kaushika. Lakulisha is considered to be the last incarnation of the twenty eight of Lord Shiva. The worship of Lord Shiva includes practices which include bathing in holy ash as many as thrice a days and to live in complete isolation. In the upper path called 'Ati marga', two important levels exist, one is the Pashupata and the other sub-branch, the Lakula, a branch of the same was the Kalamukha. The Pashupatas no doubt are the oldest Shaiva sect of the second century AD which is mentioned in the Mahabharata.[4] The only Pashupata manuscript available is the Pashupata Sutra with a comprehensive commentary by Kaundinya. According to the tradition, this literature is the life of Rudra who later became the historical figure, Lakulisha after entering Brahmin corpse. This incarnation is regarded as last incarnations of Shiva as mentioned in the series of Purana, Kurma Purana. In this incarnation of Lakulisha, he taught Pashupata Sutra.

A Pashupata ascetic is supposed to be a Brahman who had gone through the caste initiation ceremony. He can become a Pashupata in any stage of life according to his choice but he should not talk to low castes and women. The Pashupata ascetic must practice brahmacharya although this was disapproved and by some Vedic texts and the Kurma-Purana. The Pashupatas were on the edge of an orthodox society, sometimes crossing the four stages for a fifth 'perfect stage' and thereby rejecting the Vedic householder commands on purity and family. Unlike other branches of Shaiva, the Pashupatas never completely discarded or out rightly rejected the Vedic values. Liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth was possible after death only. This liberation was supposed to be by the grace of Rudra although the blessing of Lord Pashupata was also important. This required the path of observance i.e. Vrata involving a spiritual practice 'Sadhana' in three stages.

The first stage of the three involved an ascetic simple living at a Shiva temple covering the body in holy ash. It also includes avoiding bathe and to worship the Lord Pashupata by singing and dancing. They practice meditation on five main Shiva mantras. In the second stage the Pashupata ascetic was to leave the temple, get rid of the external signs of his Pashupata cult attachment and start moving in public places in the most anti-social ways including acting as if mad, snoring loudly even when not in sleep and walking as being crippled. These particular steps were done purposely to invite the wrath and abuses of people. It was believed that by doing so the people's benefit of merit or good karma would be automatically transferred to the Pashupata ascetic meanwhile his own bad karma would get transferred to them. The third and probably the final stage were to completely withdraw to a remote area like a cave or abandoned house in order to have meditation by chanting the five sacred mantras and the syllable 'om'. A stage would come when this meditation could bring insight and enlightenment after which he could finally move to a cremation ground where he is supposed to live for rest of his life where he ultimately dies uniting finally with the Lord Pashupata.



One of the cults of Shaivism, 'Kapalikas', the 'skull-bearers' is said to have bifurcated from the Pashupatas and were criticized by them. Sometimes they were portrayed as fully drunken, engaged in all forms of human sacrifice and even practicing the black magic. In the Sanskrit drama 'Malati-Madhava', a Kapalika said philosophically, "Being exclusively devoted to alms alone, penance alone and rites alone all this is easy to obtain. Being intent upon the Self alone, however, is a state difficult to obtain." Followers of Kapalika sect beg food in the human skull. Many scholars have attached a link between the early Kapalikas and the later period Gorakshanatha yogis. It is said that in the seventh century one more sect diverged out of the traditional Pashupatas called the 'Kalamukhas' or 'black-faced' who later on established an organized social structure followed by temples and monasteries in modern day Karnataka and south India. In the absence of their manuscripts, the details of their philosophy are obscure. The Veera Shaiva School is accepted by the scholars to have also sprung up replacing the early Kalamukhas taking over their place of worship and ashramas.[5]

There were some sub-divisions inside the Pashupata cult itself, the most important of them was the Lakula. The followers of these were ascetics who had accepted the doctrines of the Pashupata Sutra. They practiced most extreme ascetic practices and rejected the Vedic injunctions than the other Pashupatas. A part of the Lakula suborder were the Kalamukha cult about whom we get the information mainly from the epigraphic evidence in

the south. They were most prevalent in Karnataka region where finally the Lingayata sect in the latter half of the thirteenth century replaced them. The Kalamukhas had built their own temples and although full of heterodox elements in their daily practices like that of worshipping Rudra in an earthly pot full with alcohol and covering their body with cow-dung instead of ashes, they completely regarded themselves as within the norms of the Vedic fold.

In contrast to the upper path i.e. 'Ati marga', which was considered to lead a Pashupata ascetic straight to 'moksha' liberation, the path of enchanting mantras i.e. mantra marga leads to the same liberation with the acquisition of super natural powers and experiencing sensual pleasure in the higher worlds for the initiates. These traditions and rituals can be broadly divided into two categories, the 'Siddhanta' and 'Non-Siddhanta' systems. [6] All these traditions are revered as an authoritative revelation of a major body of texts named as the Agamas and Tantras. These texts were considered as heterodox by the orthodox Vedic traditional society. The also in the latter years many of these texts were successful to infiltrate through orthodoxy and came to be accepted as authoritative even within the orthodox Brahmins. The traditional path of tantra-mantra was called as the 'Tantric traditions'. The same is revealed by the Shaiva tantric texts. The religious mantras of the 'Tantric tradition' are essentially of Hindu origin and the latter Buddhist tantric material had been borrowed from Shaiva sources. The traditional Shaiva Tantras are considered to have been created by Lord Shiva. In the same line, the 'Vaishnava Tantras' were revealed by Lord Vishnu and 'Sakta Tantras' by the Goddess Shakti. [7] These were transferred to the human beings by a series of incarnations in intermediate stages. Lord Shaiva Tantric groups regard their knowledge as the mystical culmination of Vedic orthodox thought.

#### 4. Conclusion

The origin of Mantra-Tantra generally sprung in the form of a continuous dialogue between Lord Shiva and his wife, Goddess Parvati. [8] Goddess as a disciple asks certain questions and in turn Lord Shiva answers to tell her about the importance of Mantra-Tantra. In the same way in the Vaishnava Tantras found in 'Pancharatra Samhitas', the human beings know about it by the dialogue between Lord Vishnu and Goddess Laksmi. The 'Sakta' tradition believes that some of the Tantras are derived by the Goddess herself. [9] According to them, it was Lord Shiva who asked questions and the Goddess replied the mantras. This brief narrative structure also reflects the very importance of a guru in the life of a Tantric. As the Goddess Sakti receives tantric wisdom from Lord Shiva or vice versa (as claimed by Shakt tradition), so the disciples receive knowledge from their guru. The actual meanings of the Mantras of the Tantra are normally obscure and probably they were centrally compiled in the structure of oral tradition and teachings imparted by the guru. The Mantras related to Tantra regard themselves as sacred and secret, only to be revealed to a genuine disciple by the guru with the appropriate induction of the disciple which cleans the adverse power of past sins.

Traditionally the Tantra tradition covers four topics. It stands on the foundation of its four legs or 'pada'. These four are 'Vidya' or Gyana pada, 'Karya' or Kriya pada, then 'Yoga' or Yoga pada and finally 'Anushasana' or Karya pada. [10] There are a number of different tantric traditions. Although there is clear divergence over the doctrine with each tantric group regarding themselves superior, there are some common elements also especially in the area of spiritual practice i.e. 'Sadhana' and Rituals. Their practice coincides their doctrinal distinctions.

The revelation in the way of Mantras 'Mantra marga' comprises all the Shaiva Mantras of Tantra which is a major body of Mantras and texts belonging to many groups. One important distinction in the way of Mantras is in between the 'Shaiva Siddhanta' on one side and 'Non-Siddhanta' groups also called the teachings of God Bhairava 'Bhairava Shastra' on the other. These all are subdivided into different sub-traditions. There are as many as twenty-eight Tantra groups of the 'Shaiva Siddhanta' which in turn got divided into ten 'Shiva Agamas' and as many as eighteen 'Kudra Agamas' and many 'Bhairava Tantras'. Today, Pashupata monks live in few parts of Northern India and Nepal.

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Dr. Satendra Kumar Mishra is an Assistant Professor in Amity School of Languages at Amity University, Lucknow campus. His Ph.D. is from the University of Allahabad on 'Pashupata Cult'. He is a Teacher trainer. He has presented research papers in many international and national conferences. He has published research papers in many International peer-reviewed journals. He is Associate editor of International Journal of History and Research, US. He is the member of IHC and member of the editorial board of International Journal of Social Sciences, Jordan.